

FAVORABLE
Senate Bill 204
Public Schools - Maryland Civic Excellence Program - Established

Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment
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Lauren Lamb
Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 204, which would establish the Maryland Civic Excellence Program in the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and authorize a local school system to participate to recognize students who demonstrate excellence in civics and civic literacy. It would also require MSDE, no later than the 2027-2028 school year, to develop guidelines to assist participating local school systems.

MSEA represents 76,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 44 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

We support this bill's aim of increasing civic engagement among young people. The program described in this bill creates an incentive for schools and students to excel in civic literacy, and we applaud efforts to encourage students to register to vote and strive for academic achievement in social studies, government, and civics coursework.

It is crucial that any civic excellence criteria established under this program do not increase the already considerable amount of time students spend taking standardized assessments. We also encourage greater equity of access to civic-minded extracurricular activities and support efforts to ensure diverse and holistic social studies and civics education for all students.

We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 204.